

# Getting to Know Each Family

## **FAMILY COMPOSITION**

- Who is in the family? (Identify all the family members and their relationship to one another.)
- Where do the family members live?
- What are the major roles of each of the family members?
- Which family members are the primary caregivers for children?
- Who makes the decisions about child-rearing goals?
- Who makes decisions about disciplinary standards?
- Who makes the decision about health issues and treatments?
- Do family members make decisions together or does one member make the major decisions?
- What other family members or friends are included in the family's circle of support?
- How are these other individuals included?
- Are family members employed outside the home?

## **FAMILY CULTURE, ETHNICITY, AND LANGUAGE**

- With which cultural, ethnic, and linguistic groups does the family identify?
- What languages do family members speak in the home?
- What is their language of preference in communication with professionals?
- Is an interpreter needed for communication?
- Do family members have a preference for written materials or information through another medium, such as oral discussion?
- Do written materials need to be translated into the family's preferred language?

## **FAMILY CUSTOMS AND PREFERENCES**

- How would family members prefer to be greeted (e.g., by title, such as *Mr.* or *Mrs.*; by role, such as mother, father, grandmother, other)?
- Are service providers invited into the family's home?
- What are the family's customs in the home (e.g., removal of shoes when entering the home; shaking hands or not touching family members unless invited to do so)?
- Where and when would families prefer to meet or discuss issues?
- What are their hopes and dreams for the family and children?

## **CHILD-REARING PRACTICES**

- What are family members' beliefs about child development? Children's goals? Children's developmental milestones (e.g., toileting, feeding, caring for self)?
- What are family mealtime practices? Are there dietary preferences or restrictions?
- Who is responsible for feeding the children? What practices are used?
- What are the children's sleeping arrangements and routines (e.g., does the baby sleep in the same room as the parents?)?
- What are the family's beliefs about standards of behavior and discipline?
- What disciplinary methods are used? When? How much? At what age?

## **EDUCATION, HEALTH CARE, AND HELP SEEKING**

- What are the family members' beliefs and perceptions about the developmental or health condition of the family member/child?
- What are the family's beliefs and approach to health care or healing?
- On whom does the family rely for medical and health care treatment?
- What are the family members' beliefs about education of the children (e.g., readiness for school, goals of school)?
- What education and treatment approaches does the family use?
- Does the family seek help from other family members or individuals?
- Does the family seek help from any formal agencies, organizations, or community services? For what services?
- Do family members agree about the use of services/supports and the approaches that they use?
- What are the family members' feelings about seeking help and their degree of comfort in doing so?

For a more comprehensive list of questions and factors when serving young children and their families, readers are referred to Wayman, K.I., Lynch, E.W., & Hanson, M.J. (1991). Home-based early childhood services: Cultural sensitivity in a family systems approach. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 10*, 56–75.